

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

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INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: FRENCH PRESS AND SECRETARY'S PARIS STOP

GENEVA FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

SUMMARY: POSSIBLY DUE IN SOME DEGREE TO DEARTH OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION ABOUT SECETARY'S MEETINGS WITH THO, AND WITH POMPIDOU AND OTHER FRENCH OFFICIALS, FRENCH PRESS COMMENT WAS A BIT THIN, AND CONSISTED IN SOME QUARTERS OF EDUCATED GUESSING. SOME OBSERVERS THOUGHT THE OBJECTIVES ON BOTHSIDES IN KISSINGER-THO TALKS WERE LIMITED; OTHERS DEPLORED "TOTAL FAILURE" OF PARIS ACCORDS; AND NONE FOUND REASON TO PREDICT EARLY CHANGES IN CURRENT VIETNAM PICTURE AS RESULT OF DECEMBER 20 MEETINGS.AGAINST A BROADER BACKGROUND, EDITOR OF LE MONDE WEIGHED IN WITH OBSERVATIONS ON SECRETARY'S MIDDLE EAST TASK. END SUMMARY.

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1. "THIS TIME," SAID EVENING FRANCE-SOIR, "THE AMERICANS AND

NORTH VIETNAMESE DID NOT EVEN THINK ABOUT WAYS TO REACTIVATE THE PARIS ACCORDS, AND TRIED ALL THE HARDER THEREFORE TO LIMIT THE DAMAGE." FRANCE-SOIR REFERRED TO THE "SECRET TREATY" WHEREBY IT SAID HANOI HAD PROMISED TO WITHDRAW ITS FORCES FROM CAMBODIA AND LAOS WITHIN SIX MONTHS IN RETURN FOR DEPARTURE OF "ALL AMERICANS FROM SOUTH VIETNAM". PAPER SAID THIS DOUBLE PROMISE HAS NOT BEEN ENTIRELY KEPT SINCE WASHINGTON CHARGES THERE ARE STILL NORTH VIETNAMESE IN CAMBODIA AND LAOS, AND HANOI CLAIMS THERE ARE "35,000 AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL REMAINING IN SOUTH VIETNAM, DISGUISED AS CIVILANS". PAPER SAID TWO SIDES NOW "APPEAR DECIDED TO HONOR THESE UNDERTAKINGS. BUT THERE IS NO QUESTION OF GOING ANY FURTHER". OBSERVING THAT, FOR FIRST TIME SINCE JANUARY ACCORDS IT SEEMS "MR. KISSINGER IS NOT VERY SATISFIED WITH DECLARATIONS OF GOOD FAITH" FROM THO, FRANCE-SOIR THOUGHT SECRETARY SEEMED "LESS SURE OF HIMSELF, PRISONER OF THE GIGANTIC DIPLOMATIC BALLET HE HAS POWERFULLY HELPED TO ORGANIZE", AND "NOT VERY MUCH AT EASE DURING A PARIS STOP IN WHICH VIETNAM AND THE MIDDLE EAST JOCKEYED FOR THE SPOTLIGHT". IT ADDED: "HENRY KISSINGER HAS BECOME AWARE OF HIS OWN LIMITS. HE HAS UNDERSTOOD THAT IT IS RELATIVELY SIMPLE TO BEGIN THE SETTLEMENT OF A HOT CRISIS. IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO AVOID SEQUELS WHEN THE CRISIS HAS COOLED OFF. PERHAPS THIS IS A USEFUL WARNING AT THE MOMENT OF GENEVA."

2. LEFTIST COMBATS FOREIGN EDITOR DECLARED THAT PEACE ACCORD SIGNED IN JANUARY AND CONFIRMED IN JUNE "WAS SO INGENUOUSLY DEvised AND HAS BEEN SO WELL RESPECTED THAT CASUALTIES IN THE PAST ELEVEN MONTHS HAVE EXCEEDED 10,000 DEAD AND WOUNDED IN SOUTH VIETNAM." HE WONDERED HOW MANY MORE DEATHS IT WILL TAKE "BEFORE IT IS CONCEDED THAT THE PARIS ACCORDS ARE VIRTUALLY A TOTAL FAILURE", AND ARGUED FOR THE "SOLUTION ADOPTED FOR GERMANY TO BE APPLIED TO VIETNAM--A HUMANLY PAINFUL SOLUTION BUT STILL LESS PAINFUL THAN WAR".

3. IN OPINION OF FINANCIAL DAILY LES ECHOS, VIETNAM SITUATION IS GROWING WORSE EACH DAY, BUT UMS. "NO LONGER AGREES TO BE HELD RESPONSIBLE" FOR IT. PAPER SAID SECRETARY TOLD THO THAT, IF THIEU CONTINUES TO REFUSE TO HONOR THE PEACE AGREEMENTS ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL, THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT HAS ITS OWN WEAKNESS TO BLAME; THAT THIS PROVES PRG IS NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS POPULAR AS IT CLAIMS; AND THAT BY VERY ACT OF DEALING WITH THIEU, PRG IS ACKNOWLEDGING HIS STRENGTH. IN MILITARY SPHERE, SAID LES ECHOS, "KISSINGER WARNED HANOI AGAINST TEMPTATION TO TURN THE SCALES BY WEIGHT OF ARMS". FOR THE U.S., IT SAID, MAIN QUESTION WAS TO ENSURE AGAINST "MISCALCULATION" BY HANOI ABOUT RISKS OF U.S. DISENGAGEMENT. "THE DRYNESS OF THE COMMUNIQUE APPEARS TO INDICATE THAT THIS LESSON HAS BEEN HEARD. DID LE DUC THO MAKE SUCH A LONG TRIP JUST TO HEAR THAT?

SINCE NOTHING HAS LEAKED OUT FROM HIS SIDE, AN UNKNOWN ELEMENT REMAINS."

4. GAULLIST PARTY PAPER LA NATION FOUND CHIEF INTEREST IN KISSINGER-POMPIDOU MEETING IN FACT THAT POMPIDOU "IS THE FIRST CHIEF OF STATE AMONG THE NINE TO MEET WITH MR. KISSINGER AFTER COPENHAGEN AND ON THE EVE OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE".

5. SECOND CHANNEL OF TELEVISION DESCRIBED KISSINGER-THO COMMUNIQUE AS "RATHER LACONIC", BUT FELT THEIR AGREEMENT TO RETAIN CONTACT IS WORTH KEEPING IN MIND.

6. DISCUSSING "THE MOST DIFFICULT TASK" (MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT) IN A THREE-PART ARTICLE IN LE MONDE, CHIEF EDITOR ANDRE FONTAINE DECEMBER 21 SAID U.S. IS NOT "UNARMED" IN CURRENT "PETROLEUM WAR", BUT ITS POSITION WOULD BE FAR STRONGER IF IT COULD FORM A COMMON FRONT WITH ALL OIL-CONSUMING COUNTRIES AND SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THEM ALL. THIS WAS REASON FOR ENERGY ACTION GROUP PROPOSAL IN LONDON. "KISSINGER HAS NOT RECEIVED A REPLY--BUT HE IS NOT A MAN TO GIVE UP AN IDEA ONCE HE HAS LAUNCHED IT". FONTAINE SAW "EVERYTHING LINKED TOGETHER--THE U.S. DIALOGUES WITH MOSCOW, WITH EUROPE AND JAPAN, WITH THE ARAB WORLD AND WITH ISRAEL ARE INSEPARABLE FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS BEGINNING IN GENEVA, THANKS LARGELY TO KISSINGER'S PATIENT EFFORTS." BRINGING ISRAELIS, JORDANIANS AND EGYPTIANS TO SAME TABLE IS "NO MEAN SUCCESS", SAID FONTAINE, "BUT THE MOST DIFFICULT TASK STILL REMAINS. IT COULD DISCOURAGE THE MOST ENTERPRISING MINDS. BUT KISSINGER HAS UNDERTAKEN THE JOB WITH THE FIRM INTENTION TO SUCCEED. WHAT AN EXTRAORDINARY DESTINY FOR THIS PROFESSOR WHO, WHILE HIS PRESIDENT IS STILL ENTANGLED IN WATERGATE, BEARS ON HIS SHOULDERS THE DESTINY NOT JUST OF HIS ADOPTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COUNTRY, BUT TO A LARGE DEGREE THAT OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE WESTERN WORLD." STONE

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